

Jeanette Lowery, January 2026

JH: Well, good morning, Jeanette. It is a pleasure to be with you today. Thank you for making some time to talk to me again after 10 years, almost 10 years.

JL: Yeah, happy to be here.

JH: So let's just catch up with a couple of little things. We last talked, I think it was 2017, and you were 25 at the time. How old are you now?

JL: I'm going to be 34 in about a month. yes

JH: Wow. Happy birthday.

JL: Thank you.

JH: And it looks to me from the picture behind you, like a few things have gone on since we last talked.

JL: Yes. Yet a few things have happened.

JH: So it's a lot to say, hey, catch me up on nine years or a decade, but why don't you let's start by catching me up on the last nine years.

JL: Well, ah so... I think the last time we talked, I graduated college and everything and was a little bit lost on what to do schoolwise. I didn't pass my boards. And so I was kind of navigating that and trying to figure out what I needed to do. I ended up retaking my boards in 2018 and I passed. So I'm a nurse now.

JH: Oh, congratulations.

JL: Yeah.

JH: That's wonderful.

JL: Thank you. I met my husband. We got married in 2023. I had my daughter in 2024.

JL: I'm pregnant now. So we're going to have a son in June. And,

JH: Oh, congratulations.

JL: Yeah, a lot's happened in the, my personal life for sure. And then, of course, the not so fun stuff, of course, with the pandemic and stuff. And I had lost my dad in 2022. A lot has happened.

JH: I'm sorry. Yeah, I understand. Similar.

JL: Thanks

JH: The last few years, the pandemic hit and my parents were both in their 80s and these things sort of collided. And I also lost them both, lost my dad in December of 24.

JL: Yes.

JH: So I think we've all come out of a pretty dramatic and difficult period.

JH: Do you feel like you've kind of been able to lift your head up and look around in the last maybe year or two, although you've obviously you know, you've got a lot happening.

JL: Yes and no. I do. I feel like a lot's happened. I feel like 90% of the time my head's like, in a whirlwind. I'm like, oh gosh. um But... You know, I think after the pandemic and after losing my dad and everything like that, I do think with it brings some clarity in life.

JH: Yes. Yeah.

JL: So.

JH: Yeah, no, I think that's true. I think that's true. It's a hard-won, clarity.

JL: Yeah, definitely shows you, like what's important in life and what really doesn't matter. And, you know.

JH: Yeah, I agree. So um where do you live? Remind me. I mean, you don't have to be super specific if you don't want to be, but roughly.

JL: No, we, I've moved so many different places. When I talked to you last time I was in Charlotte, North Carolina, and that's where I met my husband and he actually was a travel nurse at the time and so we ended up like traveling all over the United States um for the last about seven years so currently I'm in ah the Phoenix Arizona area I'm in one of the suburbs but we after we met we moved to like the Washington DC area then we moved to Chicago Illinois we were in Omaha, Nebraska for a while We went back to North Carolina for a little while, back to Omaha, Nebraska for a little while.

JL: And then now we're back. in We're not back. We're in Arizona.

JH: Was that all for travel nursing?

JL: So most of that was for travel nursing. And then there came a point when he was done with travel nursing. We're like, OK, we're going to settle down. But I feel like both of us are a little nomadic. And so after, like the year mark, we got, like the itch and we're like, Oh, I don't know if we want to, like stay here. And so we still continue to travel even after having a family. It's been a little crazy, but, um, it is what it is.

JH: Yeah, I mean, you get, you get your children used to the idea that they can kind of move through the world. I did the same thing with our daughter was 2 when she came home. She's 19 now. And we're, obviously, we were older parents. And I just, you know, we'd plan these vacations and my husband would say, well, what about Caroline? And I'd say, what do you

mean? What about she's coming?

JL: Exactly. And that's us too. I mean, even though we've moved a lot, we do try and, um you know, do some little vacations and stuff like that. And so our daughter is like a little over one and a half now, but she's been to a lot of different states already. So, so

JH: She might be like my daughter and later on she'll recite to you everywhere she's been.

JL: Yeah.

JH: They're like notches. She'll keep track, you know

JL: Exactly.

JH: So, how's motherhood? What's that like?

JL: Motherhood's been uh it's been really good and crazy. It's very chaotic but it's it's it is amazing and I think for a lot of adoptees, like this is the first biological connection I've ever had in my life and so it's been really neat and um

JH: Mm-hmm.

JL: She looks a lot like me, so that's pretty cool too. Because like I said, you just, I don't know, growing up as a transracial adoptee, you just don't see yourself in anyone. And so it's really cool to see that.

JH: Did you think about that when you were planning to have a family? Did it, was that on your mind much or has it kind of surprised you a bit?

JL: Yes. No, I think it's always been a little bit on my mind. Um, a few of my adoptee friends, they've, they've had children you know before me. And so I've always thought that was such, like a cool piece. you know like you know that's the first biological connection they had. And to really see their features in their children, it was like it was so cool. And so I was, of course, really happy and excited when it happened to me. Yeah.

JH: How about your husband? What's his, how are, what does he think about the sort of adoption, nature, nurture connection?

JL: He, I mean, he's, he's always been, like, extremely interested, extremely supportive. We've watched like, a lot of documentaries together and stuff like that. He's, like, he's very interested in it. And I don't think, like, he so much thought as, like, the, oh, wow, this is, like, the first biological connection. But then, like, when I talked about it and mentioned it, he's like, oh, my gosh, yeah, like, that is so cool. And, you know, it is. It's neat.

JH: Did you ever do any DNA testing?

JL: Yeah.

JH: You did.

JL: I did. I did the 23andMe, probably around 2018, actually. So right after we talked. And um I was actually very surprised by it because I've always been told I had different features. And so I was thinking, I was like, okay, it's got to come back as, you know, like something maybe a little bit more than, you know, just like 1% or whatever of something other than Chinese. I was like, there has to be, because so many people would guess something else. Like I've gotten, like Filipino all the time and, you know, a lot of other different types of, you know, Asian ethnicities. And so I was like, okay, I'm so interested to see. I did. I got like 98% Chinese, I think. And then, of course, there were some like subtypes and stuff, but one of them was like the Dai ancestry or whatever. And so I don't know, you know maybe it's just like I just have features from like a smaller ethnic group within China, but I was surprised. I did have, you know like I said, it was like 98. It was like a very high percentage. I was Chinese. Yeah.

JH: Wow. Did you do, did you, did you, I know when we talked last time, you talked about hoping, you know, maybe one day you could find out if you had a sibling.

JL: Yep.

JH: Mm-hmm.

JL: No, no luck there. I've gotten, the closest I've gotten was like a third cousin, I think, or something like that. and of course there's like hundreds of people that, like meet that criteria. And so I have not gotten any close relatives, unfortunately.

JH: So you did 23andMe, you said, is that right? And then did you, can you walk us through how that works for people who haven't done it?

JL: Yeah, so you literally, ah nowadays I think you could just get the kit like at Target. But I ordered, you know, I ordered the kit online. They send it to you. It's literally just a saliva sample. So you just, like spit in this tube, you send it back to them, you track it along the way, you know, while they're processing it, and then you just, you get your results back. And it is pretty interesting because the more samples they get, they do send you, like updated results because the more information they get, you know, the more detailed they could get on, you know, your part. And so it has been interesting. Yes, my percentages have fluctuated a little bit and and stuff, but for the most part, it stayed pretty consistent over the last decade.

JH: And then is it 23andMe that tells you if other people are? Okay...

JL: Yes. 23andMe. And then you could actually use, like their DNA sequencing and put it in. And it was actually my husband that found it. There were like two other websites based out of China. I think it was 23mofang and there's another one. I can't remember what it was, but he entered my DNA like sequencing or whatever up in the, into those profiles to see if I had any other relatives in China. And once again, it was all, like third cousins, like super far distant

relatives. So nothing. Unfortunately, nothing came of it, but we tried.

JH: Yeah, you tried. You made you've made you made all the efforts. How did it leave you in terms of your thinking about all of this and feeling about it?

JL: I think at first I was really disappointed, but I think as the years have gone on, I'm like, you know, it is what it is. And we did try, you know, I tried.

JH: Mm-hmm.

JL: So it's not like I, I didn't, um. And I guess I'm just letting fate, destiny, whatever happen. You know, if it's going to happen, it's going to happen. If not, then it's okay.

JH: Yeah. Yeah. And tell us your, briefly, your origin story. Where were you, your province, and what did your paperwork say?

JL: So... So I was Hunan Province, Chenzhou City, and my paperwork said I was found outside of a, like a government building and, um, and then brought to the orphanage. And I was adopted at eight months old. So, and I think they found me when I was about three months old. So I was in the orphanage for about five months.

JH: Have you kept up with any of the, um there's been a lot of writing and reporting and, and research actually by academics into the international adoption program from China and also just generally international adoption. Is that something that you decide to keep up with or do you sort of think of it as, hey, this is, everybody's got an origin story, this is mine and there's the rest of life happening, you know?

JL: I keep up with it, but not like it's not like a main focus of mine in life. Like I said, if a new documentary comes up, like I'll for sure watch it. I'm interested to, you know, learn and, and whatever. If there's an article, like, I'll read it. But it's not something that I actively seek out all the time and, and whatnot. But if it comes across my path, I am interested.

JH: And what do you, what do you think about it now? I mean, we never really talked about... different adoptees I've talked to have different views, um especially now after a number of years have passed.

JL: Yep.

JH: And there you know there's been some reporting around trafficking and and you know I've had some adoptees say, I don't believe anything in my paperwork. I've had other adoptees say, it's perfectly possible my paperwork is accurate, even with all these other things going on. So I'm just interested in, especially because you're a little older than the rest of the adoptees on the site so you've had some time to really form your life and begin to think about things. And I wonder what you think about the program. And especially now that China is also, the program is closed, as we know, and women in China are being encouraged to have children.

JL: Yep and they they're seeking girls now too because now they have a shortage and yeah I so for me I think I look at it a little bit differently than like you said a lot of adoptees I think

because I am older and because I was born with a birth defect and stuff like that I, I think it's very plausible that

JH: And they're seeking.

JL: my origin story is pretty accurate. You know, I could foresee not only was I a girl, I had a birth defect, you know, I think I probably was put up for adoption. You know, that's pretty plausible. I don't think I was trafficked. I don't think I was kidnapped. I don't think I was, you know, stolen or anything like that. Um I do think it's really interesting. There was one documentary, can't remember the name of it, but it really talked about the, the trafficking portion of, of, you know um not only international adoption, but you know Chinese adoption in particular. And I did. I thought it was extremely interesting. I do think it was more plausible closer to the late 90s, early 2000s. I think earlier on like I said, around my time, I think it was pretty true. And the reasons why we were being given up were pretty accurate. But I, oh sorry, go ahead.

JH: So, sorry. No, you go ahead.

JL: No, I mean, I think, like you said, I am, like, older and I've had a lot of time to reflect and stuff like that. I've gone through a lot of um identity stuff, especially around, um you know, Black Lives Matter and everything that was happening there. And now with ICE, you know, everything like that. I've had a lot of identity stuff. But I think when it comes to, like my own origin story and how that came to be, that I don't really question.

JH: Do you feel like, the, you know, if the program were to reopen, would you feel like that's a good thing?

JL: Ah, um, no, I mean, I'm glad it's closed. I'm glad women are encouraged to have babies. You know, I'm, I'm glad that they're, I don't know about acknowledgement, but I think they could see their flaws in what they decided to do for their country. And what the backlash is now of their, their choices. And now they have to, to live with it.

JH: Sure. Exactly. There's a kind of irony to messing around with people's reproductive rights. It has a way of not exactly panning out the way you hoped it would and in all in all manner.

JL: Yep. Yeah.

JH: Are you comfortable talking a bit about the identity stuff that you mentioned and what that has been?

JL: Absolutely. It was tough. you know Like I said, with Black Lives Matter and then with COVID and recall you know calling the Chinese flu and everything like that, that was tough. And I was living in Chicago at the time and for the first time ever, I think I was afraid to go, like on public transportation by myself. Like I was like, more aware and that was the first time ever that I really was aware of like, really my surroundings and like the types of people I was being surrounded by. And, you know, I don't know up until that point. Yeah, of course, like you realize, oh, I'm the only Asian person here, you know, but okay. But that was the first time I was like, oh, this could be a problem. You know, someone can target me. Someone can do something crazy to me. That was the first time it ever kind of was planted in my mind. And from then forward, it really

has kind of... impacted me, you know, and like I said, now with ICE and, and all of that, I'm like, should I be carrying my passport? Should I be carrying my citizenship paperwork? Should I be carrying, you know, all this stuff with me, and then I'm afraid I'm going to lose it or, you know, whatever. um it is, it's, it, it impacts you every day.

JH: Do you carry citizenship documentation with you?

JL: I haven't up till now, um I have heard that ICE's presence is ramping up in the Phoenix area. So it is something that I've been thinking about doing.

JH: You were adopted before passage of the Child Citizenship Act, so you were you you were naturalized when you came home.

JL: Naturalized.

JH: And your parents did that.

JL: Yeah.

JH: Yeah. Yeah. Because, you know, it's heartbreaking to think about people, not just Chinese adoptees. Obviously, there have been Korean adoptees, pretty high profile cases where adoptive parents did not take care of this. And adoptees were surprised to learn when they went to college or tried to enter the military that they were not actually citizens. And I wonder what you are, you know, how, how you feel about all of that.

JL: Yep. That's really unfortunate, you know, and, um, Yeah, that I would be shocked. I'd be shocked and angry. And I don't even know. I'm very grateful that my parents, you know, did everything and I have all my paperwork. I know where it is, you know, and, and that's another piece, too. I think sometimes parents, they keep everything and don't share anything with their children. And then they grow up to be adults and they're like, oh, I have no idea where my paperwork is. I didn't even know there was paperwork. You know, I think that's doing your child a disservice.

JH: Yeah, it's interesting because my daughter is now a second semester sophomore in college and she's in college in- state. So I have her paperwork in a lockbox, but I just applied for a passport card so she could put it in her wallet just in case because of similar, you know, you just can't help thinking that if this came up,

JL: Yep.

JH: You know, how is she protected? And I thought it's interesting as an adoptive parent, what you're saying, because I've a lot about making sure she understands what her paperwork is and where it is and when she's ready to have it, she's kind of decided, I don't want all this stuff in my college dorm.

JL: Right. And that's fair.

JH: Yeah. But later, you know, that she's really in control of it and knows how to secure it and understands what it all is.

JL: Yeah. And how important it is, especially now. I think that's extremely important as a, you know, as a parent to teach your children because I don't, you know, when you grow up, especially as a transracial adoptee, that's stuff that you don't really think about. You know, you feel like you fit in with your family, you fit in with your community. And so that's not something you think about, like, oh, I need to prove, you know, that I belong here. And, you know, now that's coming up at the forefront that, yeah, you know, we unfortunately do have to prove that we belong here.

JH: Remind us where you grew up.

JL: Connecticut, small town in Connecticut. So the majority was a white community, you know very, very small Asian population, which the majority of us were transracial adoptees. So that wasn't really, ah that didn't really fit in with the yeah cultural anything. But, yeah, I mean, I do feel like for the majority of my life I was shielded, you know, because I grew up in such a small, tight-knit community, you know, I knew everybody. Everyone knew me. So I didn't feel like I was out of place. It wasn't until, you know, college and beyond that you really start to feel like oh, no, things are different.

JH: Did you, you mentioned Black Lives Matter. It's interesting. Did you feel solidarity?

JL: Yeah. I felt solidarity, but also like I had a lot to learn because clearly I grew up, you know, in a white family and in a white, you know, community and stuff like that. And so I felt like I had a lot to learn too in order to be able to stand up, you know, for other people of color because I, you know, you don't, you don't know what you don't know. And so I did, I took that opportunity to try and educate myself a little bit more. I think with Black Lives Matter, and like I said, with COVID and all the, like Asian hate that came from that too. The other part of it that was a really tough realization was with family, family and friends, you know, and some of their views that obviously didn't align with mine because how could they? Or how would they? Or whatever. That was a pretty tough realization.

JH: And what were those views? You mean? Yeah, sorry. Go ahead.

JL: Yeah, no, um not only, I mean, of course, some people, a lot of people, you know, are, you know, support Black Lives Matter and stuff like that. But it's, it's not so important when it doesn't affect you, you know, and so even with, um like I said, with COVID and the Chinese hate, and when all the like, the nail salon and massage parlors were being targeted, and what was that in Atlanta and stuff like that, like, those were things that I was feeling so deeply and yet I didn't have like a community to back me up on that. You know, like I didn't have family checking in like, 'Oh my gosh, are you okay? Like that's really crazy because people like that look like you were being targeted.' You know, that didn't really even cross their mind because, 'Oh it's Jeanette, like she's with our family. And I think 90% of my family probably think I'm white, you know, because I just am a part of the family. Like it's just something that just doesn't connect or doesn't really, they don't think about, and they don't, 'cause they don't have to think about it.

JH: Yeah, I'm kind of, I'm using air quotes now, the whole fallacy of colorblindness.

JL: Yeah.

JH: On the one hand, you grow up in a family, in a community where you feel completely comfortable, totally accepted. And as a young person, you didn't have to think really, doesn't sound like —and tell me if I'm not getting this right, doesn't sound like you really thought a lot about the fact that, hey, I'm Chinese and my family isn't.

JL: Mm-hmm.

JH: It was only an adult awareness as you came into the wider world, but your family and some of your friends don't come to that awareness in the same way. And do you feel like you kind of had to educate them? Were they open to how you felt about it or surprised?

JL: Yes. Yes and no. I battled with that for a while, you know, and, and I think... I don't know. I'm also the type of person I don't like conflict. I don't like whatever. And, um, so it would be like little hints of like, yeah, isn't that crazy what happened? You know, just trying to get like, some ounce of like reaction versus being like, I really was hurt because you guys didn't check, you know, what, check up on me or whatever. Um, and so it took me a while to like really, I don't know, to really understand how I was feeling and to, I think even still, like I haven't 100% like portrayed how maybe alone I felt during that time. You know, I think now with everything that's happened, I'm pretty vocal on like social media and stuff like that with my views and and everything. And I've written some pretty long posts about, you know, being a transracial adoptee and how it affects you in certain ways and stuff. So I do think, you know, my family and friends are pretty aware of my viewpoints at this point in time. But at the time, it was, it was hard. Like I said, it felt lonely.

JH: What about the immigration stuff? Do you think, does do your family or friends have any, do they think or indicate to you that they see that this is something you might think about and feel affected by? Is it any different in the, in this situation than it was during the Black Lives Matter protests?

JL: Exactly. I think they're more aware. I think this time they're more aware because they do understand like, oh, well, you know, Jeanette isn't, you know, she wasn't born here and whatever. My mom, especially, you know, she's very aware of, like everything that's going on now and and whatnot. But I still think in, like the broader sense and and I don't know, you even see it in Phoenix here. It's tough because it's such, like a large, like, Hispanic community and stuff like that. And yet you still see people supporting this administration, supporting what's going on. And you're just like, how? Like, I don't, I don't understand, you know, like I don't, I don't get it. And so it's hard, like even having your family and friends who are so removed from situations like this. Yeah. They don't understand, but it's like people who this directly affects not understanding. And you're just like, I don't, I don't get it,

JH: So you mean you're meeting people in Phoenix who are Hispanic, who support the yeah, yeah.

JL: Yeah. yeah Yep. And you're just like, I don't understand.

JH: I think there's a kind of, you know, what I've read too, and obviously being in Texas, it's, you know, there's a, there's a kind of, I get the dynamic. There's a, I did it the right way. Why can't everybody else, thinking?

JL: Yeah.

JH: Mm-hmm.

JL: And I think so too. And, um and it's unfortunate because I don't know, ah you just, I don't know the lack of empathy that comes with that and the lack of I don't know. It's just, it's tough. Yeah.

JH: Mm hmm. What are your plans as you look ahead to the extent that anybody has any when they have a little small baby and expecting another baby? Your plans are pretty obvious. But what do you and your husband talk about for the future?

JL: So, like I said, we're a little nomadic, especially up until this point. We're really far from a lot of family and friends at this point in time. So our plan within the next couple years is to move back east so that we're at least closer to family and friends. Like, for example, like I have um one of my best friends who is a transracial adoptee as well. She's getting married in March. And even to just like, coordinate and try and plan to get there, and, and find childcare. It's like, oh my gosh, like it shouldn't be this hard. And yes, we did it to ourselves because we moved here. But I'm like, yeah, we have to move back. And even my husband's is in agreement, you know, it's just we're too far from like family. So that's number one. Yeah. Number two is you know just really trying to figure out where we want to settle down on the East Coast, you know? We're trying to find, you know, good school systems and you know where it is pretty diverse because obviously my children don't look... you know they're not white facing at all, even though my husband is white. And so we're just trying to kind of figure out where we want to land.

JH: Yeah, that seems like, and you know, you can't, you don't solve all problems at once, but that's, that's a, that's a totally manageable overarching goal, you know, when you get to the point where you're ready.

JL: Yes.

JH: And I know from, I was far from my parents and my brother when, when Caroline came home and I really wish that, We were all very close. She was very close with my parents. My brother is her godfather and his wife is her godmother. But when they're really young, it's just nice to be around family. It's helpful. And it also just is comforting, you know, so I get it.

JL: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I'm happy for FaceTime, but it's not the same.

JH: Exactly. My line was always, well, that's why they make airplanes. Well, flying is such a joy these days that, you know, yeah

JL: Oh my gosh. It's expensive. And then yes, flying with the toddler's a choice.

JH: Oh, yeah.

JH: Well, is there anything you would like to put out there now that, you know, about anything really, about um what's happening in the world, about your feelings about adoption or anything else that I haven't asked you about or we haven't talked about?

JL: I don't think so. I think we hit everything that I was thinking about talking about anyways on this, on this interview. I, you know, I think identity and everything, it just takes time. You know I'm really proud of where I've come over the last decade. I never would have even imagined I'd be where I am today when I was 25. So I don't know for all the people that are having a tough time, especially transracial adoptees, like I said, a lot of identity stuff comes up, especially as you're becoming an adult, when you get into motherhood, um you know, all that stuff you have to like face and it's tough, but when you get on the, not that I'm on the other side of it, but when you like really start to navigate it and understand your feelings and your thoughts and views about the world and stuff I think it's a pretty beautiful thing.

JH: I think that's a perfect point to end.

JL: Thank you:

JH: I just want to thank you so much. It's been absolutely fantastic to catch up with you. We have to stay on the line when I stop recording for a minute or two. And just let me ask you, are you okay if I check in with you in five years?

JL: Yeah, absolutely. We'll see where I am, will be oh my gosh. I'll be quite old by then. I'll be only 40.

JH: Okay. We won't even go down that road.

JL: I know.

JH: Okay. I'm going to stop recording now.

JL: Okay.